

Press Release

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High-Speed Rail Authority and Women Construction Owners & Executives Sign Memorandum of Understanding

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) today joined the Women Construction Owners & Executives (WCOE) in a major effort to maximize small business participation, especially those owned by women, on the high-speed rail system. During a special ceremony on Capitol Hill at the WCOE National Conference, Authority Board of Directors Chairman Dan Richard and WCOE President Lee Cunningham signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that ensures women-owned construction firms and female construction executives are aware of, and prepared for, job opportunities on the project.

The Authority Board of Directors is keenly aware of the need to help small businesses, especially those that employ women or are owned by women. Board Member Katherine Perez-Estolano co-founded a company that crafts environmentally friendly solutions to create vibrant communities and Board Member Thea Selby is the owner of a digital marketing and communications firm.

“There are almost eight million women-owned firms in the United States and their numbers are growing all the time,” Authority Board Chair Dan Richard said. “As they gain experience, studies show women are running businesses more efficiently and looking to expand at earlier stages than they did before. Providing a pathway to the high-speed rail project will help drive that business model and help improve the lives of women and their families along with those they employ and supervise.”

“WCOE grows contacts, contracts and the bottom line for women in construction. That is why I am so excited about the MOU,” declared WCOE President Lee Cunningham, who also sits on the Authority’s Business Advisory Council and owns BT Metal Sales & Fabrication. “Our sole mission is to level the playing field for women contractors and female construction executives. Our partnership with the Authority will allow us to do just that and open the door for opportunities for women on the largest infrastructure project in the nation.”

The MOU outlines the Authority and WCOE’s joint outreach efforts to strengthen and expand the utilization of women-owned firms and women construction executives on the high-speed rail project. The Authority and WCOE will exchange information and material to improve awareness of the project and have made a strong commitment to facilitating joint education and training programs that will benefit women-owned companies and female construction executives.

Small businesses are playing a major role on the high-speed rail project through the Authority’s aggressive Small Business Program. It calls for a 30 percent goal for small business participation which includes a 10 percent goal for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and a three percent goal for Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE).

About the High-Speed Rail Authority

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) is responsible for planning, designing, building and operation of the first high-speed rail system in the nation. By 2029, the system will run from San Francisco to the Los Angeles basin in under three hours at speeds capable of over 200 miles per hour. The system will eventually extend to Sacramento and San Diego, totaling 800 miles with up to 24 stations. In addition, the Authority is working with regional partners to implement a statewide rail modernization plan that will invest billions of dollars in local and regional rail lines to meet the state’s 21st century transportation needs. To learn more visit the Authority’s website at www.hsr.ca.gov and join us on facebook.com/CaliforniaHighSpeedRail and follow us at twitter.com/cahsra.

About the Women Construction Owners & Executives

The Women Construction Owners & Executives are focused on one – to help members' businesses grow and prosper. Dedicated to creating a level playing field for women-owned firms in the construction industry, WCOE is proud to represent large and small woman-owned firms as well as executive women in policy making positions with some of the largest corporations in the country. WCOE enjoys a prestigious reputation on Capitol Hill and uses that clout to advocate for issues important to women who have entered the construction industry. Whether it is equal access to federal contracting opportunities, opposition to onerous federal regulatory burdens, support for expanding access to business financing, or participation in Congressional hearings, WCOE represents our members' interests. To learn more visit the WCOE website at <http://www.wcoeusa.org> and the join us on <https://www.facebook.com/#!/wcoeusa>.

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